UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

A STUDY OF PIETY IN THE GREEK TRAGIC CHORUS

BY
HENRY VOGEL SHELLEY

A THESIS

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PHILADELPHIA, PA.
1919

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A STUDY OF PIETY IN THE GREEK TRAGIC CHORUS

Introduction

The religion of the ancient Greeks presents a fascinating study. It constitutes a phase of Greek life, which only in very recent times has received serious consideration, but fortunately at present enough research has been made in the subject to determine at least its general outline. To the modern mind it is a matter of great interest and astonishment to note as two salient and remarkably peculiar characteristics of Greek religion its utter lack of dogma and its marked influence on every aspect of the national life and thought, especially the drama and the four great athletic institutions. But the Greek mind, unlike the modern, drew no line of demarcation between the religious and the secular, for by reason of the ubiquity of the Greek religious influence secularism simply did not exist in Greek life. The idea that comedy had a religious origin seems to us moderns well-nigh preposterous; but we can hardly say the same of tragedy. The very nature of tragedy inevitably reveals the fundamental human need of the consolatory power of religion.[1] The happy, healthy, prosperous man is quite apt to let human nature dominate completely his thoughts and actions; but if stricken with adversity or placed in jeopardy, he turns instinctively to a higher Power for consolation, realizing in this predicament that the help of his fellow-man is utterly futile. It is just this realization of man's complete dependence upon a higher Being, which constitutes the nucleus, the quintessence, the vital meaning of religion.

In Greek tragedy, where the sense of man's misfortune has been portrayed with a profundity of understanding characteristic of no other literature, we shall find abundant evidence of the innate religious spirit in man. Flourishing in the fifth century, that imposing span of time during which the intellect received an impetus for development more powerful than at

[1] The theory of William Ridgeway (*The Origin of Tragedy*, p. 93) that Greek tragedy arose from the worship of the dead seems untenable.

any other period in the history of the world, tragedy thus embodied the religious ideas of the Greeks in a highly advanced stage of evolution. It was truly the Golden Age of Greek history. No greater tragedians than Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides have ever lived, and their extant works remain, therefore, a priceless literary heritage.

Personnel of the Tragic Chorus

The orthodox system of religion that prevailed throughout Greece during the fifth century was what Gilbert Murray terms Olympianism.[2] Zeus is the supreme god of this anthropomorphic hierarchy, which was introduced into Greek literature by Homer,[3] and which flourished as the state religion till it was apparently superseded, at least among the thinking classes, by the various philosophical schools of later days. Greek tragedy fairly bristles with Olympianism. The actors, to be sure, voice orthodox sentiments for the most part,[4] but it is the chorus κατ' ἐξοχήν that constantly admonishes the spectators to preserve a pious attitude toward the gods. Indeed, the tragic poets seem to have made this a vital function of the chorus. Furthermore, it would hardly be natural to find unorthodox ideas emanating from a company of sage elders, mild maidens or prosaic matrons. For almost all the tragedies possess choruses of some one of these three classes, and in several instances, notably the *Eumenides*, the *Supplices* and the *Bacchæ*, the plays actually derive their titles from the chorus. In all the tragedies of Aeschylus the choruses are composed either of elders or of women. Euripides, too, is remarkably consistent in this matter: in fact, if exception be made of the *Rhesus*,[5] whose chorus is represented by sentinels of the Trojan army, Euripides will be found to be virtually in accord with Aeschylus on this point. In only one play, the *Hippolytus*, does he employ young men as a chorus, and even then he has recourse to

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[2] *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, chap. II.

[3] This religion, of course, existed and developed centuries before Homer.

[4] Sometimes (e. g. *Septem* 223, 702; *P. V.* 938) the actors deliver unorthodox utterances.

[5] Professor W. N. Bates (*T. A. P. A.*, vol. xlvii) has, however, clearly shown the *Rhesus* to be genuine.

an unprecedented phenomenon in tragedy, a double chorus, or, more precisely, two choruses, one of huntsmen, the companions of Hippolytus, and the other of women of Troezen. In five of the plays of Sophocles, the choruses consist of maidens, women or elders. The *Philoctetes*, with both actors and chorus composed of men, reveals thereby a unique feature in Greek tragedy; moreover, since the entire cast of characters is possessed of the martial spirit, the play is naturally instinct with the warrior's rugged virility unsoftened by woman's inevitable power of pathos. Scyrian sailors of Neoptolemus' crew comprise the chorus of the *Philoctetes*, and mariners of Salamis that of the *Ajax*. It is interesting to note that these two choruses include not merely young men, but young men living a maritime life.

If, as seems true, we find the ideas of the sanctity of tradition and of religious conservatism and piety most firmly rooted in the hearts and minds of sage old men, who have lived their allotted threescore years and ten; of submissive maidens reared in homes of hallowed atmosphere; and of sober matrons who have themselves reared these maidens; is it any wonder that the Greek tragic poets made the chorus, which, with but few exceptions, comprised such a personnel, serve primarily the purpose of inculcating in the hearts of the spectators its own reverent attitude toward the state religion and things traditional?

It would be of absorbing interest, if psychologically possible, to determine whether those plays which are named after the chorus actually exerted a stronger influence for piety over the people. Of such there are nine, not an insignificant proportion; and of these nine the choruses of all save the *Persæ* are composed of women or of maidens. It might, perhaps, be expected that Euripides contributes the majority of these plays, in view of the fact that we possess nearly three times as many of his tragedies as of those of Sophocles or Aeschylus. But such is not the case; for Aeschylus has the same number as Euripides, each contributing four, while Sophocles offers but one.[6]

[6] Aesch. *Supplices, Persæ, Choephori, Eumenides.*
Eur. *Suppliants, Bacchæ, Phoenissæ, Troades.*
Soph. *Trachiniæ.*

An interesting comparison is afforded by two plays in this list bearing curiously enough the same name, but dealing with different subjects, viz., the *Supplices* of Aeschylus and the *Suppliants* of Euripides, usually so translated to avoid confusion, but both entitled Ἱκέτιδες in the Greek. How much more effective does Aeschylus render his play by entitling it the *Suppliants* rather than the *Danaides!*[7] This, the earliest extant specimen of Greek tragedy,[8] is so replete with the spirit of piety, that it may almost be described as one long continuous prayer. The title *Danaides* would doubtless have failed to suggest to the spectators any religious association; in fact, they would instinctively recall the well-known story of the daughters of Danaus who murdered their cousin-husbands and thereby suffered dire punishment in Hades; and this popular conception, which doubtless fostered an unsympathetic attitude toward the Danaids, was just what Aeschylus sought to counteract at the outset, for the *Supplices* forms the first play of a trilogy of which the two ensuing parts are lost. In this play we see most clearly the dithyrambic origin of tragedy. The chorus constitute an indispensable element, a *sine qua non*, while the actors' rôle is decidedly subordinate. In no other tragedy do we find such prominence assigned to the chorus. With the development of tragedy, however, as seen in the works of Sophocles and Euripides, the function of the chorus, as is well known, gradually dwindled in importance, while that of the actors correspondingly increased. The dramatic element, stimulated in proportion to the possibilities of the plot, became the chief object of interest; so that we find in certain plays of Euripides that the chorus had little or nothing to do with the vital action.

Far different from the chorus of Aeschylus' *Supplices* is that of Euripides' *Suppliants*. So far as concerns the plot and its logical development, the chorus in Euripides' *Suppliants* is of little or no significance. Being the mothers of Argive chiefs slain before Thebes, they add to the play a consummate touch of pathos and excite sympathy and pity in the hearts of the audience. But that is all. The dramatic interest cen-

[7] The chorus is composed of the daughters of Danaus.

[8] Its archaic character proves its early date, which, however, cannot be definitely determined.

ters in the actors, with the chorus forming a conventionally attractive but unessential adjunct. The purpose of Aeschylus in writing the *Supplices* was purely religious; but Euripides was clearly actuated by a political motive. Ostensibly treating the tragic story of the struggle between Eteocles and Polynices, Euripides is in reality adroitly alluding to contemporaneous history. In 424 B. C. the Athenian army had suffered a defeat at Delium and the Thebans had refused to hand over the Athenian dead for burial. Euripides, producing the *Suppliants* three years later, recalls to the minds of the people these recent untoward incidents, and urges Athens to promote friendship with Argos. The *Supplices* of Aeschylus, on the contrary, is a virile defense of orthodox Olympianism. Zeus, the all-highest Olympian deity, is the main object of the chorus' supplication. And why? Is he not really the Danaids' progenitor, who, falling in love with the hapless Argive, Io, begat their race? It is rather difficult to ascertain Euripides' reason, if any reason there was, for naming his play the *Suppliants*, especially when we realize how natural it was for Aeschylus to give his tragedy that title. Surely we cannot attribute it to mere caprice. Let us then consider for a moment the personnel of the chorus. Mothers of the slain Argive chiefs and therefore elderly, if not actually old, women we find them to be. Now judging from what we have of Greek tragedy, we may safely conclude that the tragic poets very seldom employed old women to represent the chorus. In fact the *Suppliants* is the only extant play with such a chorus. There is no reason to suppose that old women would find it harder to execute the choral dances than old men, and yet there are as many as eight plays with choruses composed of elders.[9] Perhaps Euripides felt that the sense of bereavement experienced by the mothers of the slain chieftains was so overwhelmingly bitter as to offer ample artistic justification for naming the play after them. At any rate, the strong pathetic appeal of this tragedy is undeniable, and a tragedy, to be either ephemerally successful or lastingly great, must for one thing sound a deep note of pathos.

[9] Aesch. *Persæ, Agamemnon.*
Soph. *Antigone, Oedipus Tyrannus, Oedipus Coloneus.*
Eur. *Alcestis, Hercules Furens, Heraclidæ.*

In a marked majority of the plays the chorus consists either of maidens or matrons. Of Aeschylus' tragedies there are five with women or maidens for chorus; Sophocles contributes only two such plays; but in Euripides we find the vast preponderance of fourteen. Out of a total of thirty-two plays, therefore, eight have choruses consisting of elders, four of young men and twenty-one of maidens or matrons.[10]

Relative Importance of the Chorus in Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides

Why, then, was a chorus of women so common? The answer is not hard to find. Such a chorus possessed two distinct advantages. In the first place, women could fulfill the prime and paramount duty of maintaining religious conservatism and tradition just as well, nay better, than men, for women are naturally more conservative and religious than men; and in the next place, they produced obviously enough a much more artistic effect in the dance. Euripides, by reason of his iconoclastic tendencies in matters religious, added a somewhat secular touch to the character of the tragic chorus, yet despite his broad views on religion he never presumed to uproot the chorus' firmly planted custom of preaching piety; and his characters also are ever so often of orthodox leanings.[11] His wide popularity in antiquity may well have been due to his consummate skill in reconciling and blending a sacrosanct orthodoxy with the realism of human sin. Euripides in particular has made his characters thoroughly human. This is evident not merely on a perusal of his plays but also from a statement of his elder contemporary, Sophocles, who said that he himself drew men as they ought to be and Euripides as they were.[12] While never commonplace, Euripides is, after all, a poet of the people, and his works reflect the realities in the life of the people much more frequently and clearly than do those of

[10] According to this enumeration, there are in all thirty-three plays, the discrepancy being due to the fact that the *Hippolytus* must, by reason of its double chorus, be counted twice. The *Rhesus* is regarded as genuine and therefore included.

[11] Cf. Andromache, Orestes, Oedipus, Adrastus.

[12] Arist. *Poetics* 1460 b 34 ff.

Sophocles. And yet as a man, he eschewed the plaudits of the populace and sought the seclusion of the scholar's closet.

As can be seen from a study of Euripides' plays and also from a statement of Aristotle,[13] the function of the chorus in forming an integral part of the whole has evidently undergone considerable modification. This Aristotle considers a defect in Euripides' technique. Sophocles, so Aristotle thinks, has done right in adopting Aeschylus' method of treatment of the chorus, by which a vital share in the plot was given that body. But tragedy, in its historical descent from the cloudland of Aeschylus to the *terra firma* of Euripides, was bound to undergo accompanying changes. In Aeschylus the chorus is indispensable or essential to the development of the plot; in Sophocles we begin to note a distinct diminution of its importance, despite its integral share in the action; and lastly in Euripides the separation is all but complete. To the actors alone is entrusted the care of dealing effectively with the dramatic element. Such a development was not at all unnatural; and in the later comedy of Menander, we discover this trend carried to its logical end in the lack of a chorus altogether. The brilliance of the religious influence in Greek tragedy paled little by little with the years. Consequently the significance of the chorus as the predominant agent of that influence dwindled in proportion. And yet even the most heretical of Euripides' plays contain a reactionary element in the person of the chorus.

Phases of the Chorus' Piety

1. Deification of Abstract Ideas

Since Olympianism is essentially anthropomorphic, the chorus invoke for the most part personal, incarnate deities. They must have a concrete object to worship, for with the gift of abstract speculation they are in no wise endued. Aeschylus is preëminently inclined to give concrete expression and personification to abstract ideas. In the *Prometheus Vinctus* two of the characters represented are Power and Might; and in the *Choephori* (244 f.) Electra invokes "Power and Justice along

[13] Arist. *op. cit.* 1456 a 25 ff.: καὶ τὸν χορὸν δὲ ἕνα δεῖ ὑπολαβεῖν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν, καὶ μόριον εἶναι τοῦ ὅλου καὶ συναγωνίζεσθαι μὴ ὥσπερ Εὐριπίδῃ ἀλλ' ὥσπερ Σοφοκλεῖ.

with Zeus, the greatest of all." Themis, whom we may regard as personifying divine law, is the daughter of Zeus Klarios, i. e. the Apportioner.[14]

a. Destiny

Human destiny also is commonly a goddess.[15] Aeschylus describes her as the "armorer of Justice,"[16] and apparently superior even to Zeus.[17] Sometimes, however, as in the *Supplices* of Aeschylus, Destiny and Zeus are to be identified.[18] Here Fate enforces her decrees through the will of Zeus. This condition, however, is but natural, when we reflect that the *Supplices* represents a comparatively early stage in the development of tragedy, that at this period the personification of abstract ideas as separate, individual divinities was probably unknown to the devotees of Olympianism and that in this play Zeus is the particular object of the chorus' supplications. Zeus is their ancestor and the founder of their family. They are highly conscious of their kinship with the father of the gods. This play furnishes us, then, with a striking example of anthropomorphism in Greek religion. This idea of the exercise of fate through the will of the gods finds expression also in the *Persians*, another of the earlier plays of Aeschylus.[19] The later plays of Aeschylus, however, reveal the anthropomorphic conception of Destiny as a power superior to Zeus.[20] So also do the plays of Sophocles,[21] who speaks of Fate as "common to all mortals."[22] "Dread is its power which neither wealth nor Ares nor strong tower nor sea-beaten ship can escape."[23] Euripides likewise bears witness to this idea: "No refuge is there from fate and the inevitable," sigh the chorus in the *Hippolytus*.[24] Again in the *Heraclidæ* they proclaim the decree of Heaven whereby no man can escape his destiny.[25] He who is now prosperous may, through the force of destiny, encounter adversity.[26]

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[14] Aesch. *Supp.* 360. Sophocles, too, calls her "heavenly" (*El.* 1064).
[15] *P. V.* 511; *Cho.* 909; *Ph.* 1466.
[16] *Cho.* 647.
[17] *P. V.* 518.
[18] *Supp.* 1048 f.
[19] *Pers.* 102.
[20] *Cho.* 305, 909; *P. V.* 516.
[21] *Ph.* 1466.
[22] *El.* 860.
[23] *Ant.* 951 ff.
[24] *Hipp.* 1256.
[25] *Heracl.* 615.
[26] Eur. *Supp.* 608 f.

b. Necessity

Another pure abstraction, which the Greek mind associated with fate, was that of necessity. In the *Alcestis* the chorus, making Necessity a goddess, pay a glowing tribute to her omnipotence.[27] "Naught mightier than Necessity have I found."[28] "'Tis with thy help that Zeus fulfills his will."[29] By this latter statement the chorus imply that Necessity also, like Fate, is superior to Zeus. Aeschylus, too, personifies the concept of necessity in recognition of its supreme power.[30] Both Euripides and Aeschylus characterize it as "relentless," Euripides rendering thereby a very effective ending to the *Hecuba*.[31]

c. Time

In the *Heraclidæ* the chorus personify Time as the son of Cronus.[32] Sophocles, too, deifies this abstraction,[33] while Aeschylus bestows upon Time an epithet usually applied to Zeus.[34] In Sophocles we find Opportunity also personified.[35] All three tragic poets give expression to the kindliness and healing power of Time.[36]

d. Justice

Of all personified abstractions, however, Justice stands first and foremost. In the *Choephori* she is called the virgin daughter of Zeus and pictured by the chorus as actually taking Orestes by the hand.[37] Time and again the chorus dwell with hearty fondness upon the corrective, inevitable power of Justice as implied in the *lex talionis*. They maintain, like the Hebrews of the Old Testament, a strictly literal attitude toward the vindicating power of Justice. They can see only the letter of the law. The spirit is lacking. Mercy must not temper justice. The Christian doctrine of loving one's enemy seems preposterous to the chorus. We need only refer to the *Supplices* of Aeschylus to perceive the characteristic sentiment of the chorus toward their enemies.[38] "Bless us, but curse our enemies" is the sub-

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[27] *Alc.* 962–980.
[28] *Ib.* 965 f.
[29] *Ib.* 978 f.
[30] *P. V.* 514 f.
[31] *Ib.* 1052; *Hec.* 1295.
[32] *Heracl.* 900.
[33] *El.* 179.
[34] *Cho.* 965 (παντελής); cf. *Septem* 117.
[35] *El.* 75 f.; *Ph.* 837.
[36] *Cho.* 965; *Eum.* 286; Soph. *El.* 179; *H. F.* 805 f.
[37] *Cho.* 948 ff.
[38] *Supp.* 30 ff.

stance of their utterance, which is clearly echoed in the *Septem.*[39] In the *Choephori* Electra asks the chorus if she can in all piety pray that the slayer be slain, and the chorus promptly reply in the affirmative.[40] Then again the chorus imagine Justice as crying aloud: "For word of hate let word of hate be paid and for murderous blow let him pay murderous blow."[41] "Blood that is shed calls for other blood in requital: this is the law."[42] Justice is nurtured in the hearts of the chorus. "We claim to be righteous-judging," declare the Eumenides.[43] In the *Supplices* the Danaids seek the protection of Pelasgus, the Argive king, by appealing to his sense of justice. "Lend us thy aid, O King, and thus ally thyself with Justice, for Justice ever champions the cause of her allies and must inevitably triumph."[44] This thought is presently reëchoed by the chorus, when they urge the king to choose Justice as his ally and to render holy judgment in sight of Heaven.[45]

Since Greek religion granted safety and protection to the suppliant, guilty though he might be of a heinous offense, the chorus with characteristic piety were scrupulously careful in the observance of this rite. When Copreus, the herald of Eurystheus, king of the Argives, comes to Marathon to demand the surrender of Heracles' children, who as suppliants have taken refuge at the altar of Zeus, the chorus are quick to remind him of the suppliant's sacred right: " 'Tis fitting, stranger, that reverence be shown to suppliants of the gods, not that they be dragged away from the gods' shrines with violent hand; for the goddess, Justice, will not suffer this."[46] Now since Zeus was preëminently the god of suppliants, it would be only natural for the chorus to invoke his name here, as they do in the *Supplices* of Aeschylus. But Euripides, as is well known, was not the religious conservative that Aeschylus was, so that his preference for a personified abstraction, which even in Aeschylus' time had endeared itself to the chorus, and which Euripides here substitutes for Zeus incarnate, is hardly surprising. "The man who preserves the light of Justice shall

[39] *Septem* 481 ff., 626 ff.
[40] *Cho.* 122 f.
[41] *Ib.* 309 ff. Tucker.
[42] *Ib.* 400 ff.
[43] *Eum.* 312.
[44] *Supp.* 342.
[45] *Ib.* 395 f.
[46] *Heracl.* 101 ff.

escape the censure of his fellow-men; be bold then to do right." Thus do the chorus admonish Theseus.[47]

Aeschylus twice speaks in his choral odes of the altar of Justice.[48] In both instances, however, the use of the word is purely figurative. So, too, Theonoe speaks of the great shrine of Justice that is reared in her nature.[49] In the *Antigone* of Sophocles, Justice is pictured as sitting on a lofty throne;[50] but here, as Jebb has pointed out,[51] it is merely Justice in the form of the law of the state, which Sophocles clearly distinguishes from divine Justice that guides the course of Antigone.

"Better it is," say the maidens of Phthia, who compose the chorus of the *Andromache*, "better not to have a victory that carries with it a bad repute than to cheat justice through envy and power."[52] The Bacchanals proclaim their hearty wish to honor the gods and to spurn the ways of injustice;[53] while the Phthian maidens disdain ever to wield unjust power in home and city.[54] In the two latter passages, Euripides expresses the idea of injustice by the phrase ἔξω δίκας, which may be figuratively rendered "outside the pale of justice." The chorus, always sure of the ultimate triumph of justice, however gloomy the outlook may be, is ever happy to celebrate its triumph.[55] In speaking of the death of Aegisthus at the hands of Orestes, the chorus pay tribute to the great might of justice.[56] Similarly, in regard to the death of Clytemnestra at the hands of her children, the chorus describe the victory of justice in these words: "Verily doth God mete out justice in His good time." Here again are linked the ideas of time and justice.[57] In the *Heraclidæ* the chorus of old men of Marathon take pride in saying that their land has always wished to give to the helpless the benefit of justice's aid.[58] They feel that the expedition of the Argive king has been unjustly undertaken, and so pray that their patron goddess, Pallas Athena, may stop the advance of the impious invader.[59] They are confident in asserting that

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[47] Eur. *Supp.* 564 f.
[48] *Ag.* 383; *Eum.* 539.
[49] *Hel.* 1002.
[50] *Ant.* 853.
[51] See his note on *Ant.* 853 ff.
[52] *Andr.* 779 f.
[53] *Bacch.* 1010 f.
[54] *Andr.* 784 ff.
[55] Eur. *El.* 877 f.
[56] *Ib.* 958.
[57] *Ib.* 1169.
[58] *Heracl.* 329 f.
[59] *Ib.* 770 ff.

their city possesses the path of justice.[60] The chorus' sympathy goes out to Medea in her sorry plight; yet they do not for a moment doubt that Jason will receive his just deserts.[61]

When Electra tells the chorus of Apollo's decree bidding her and Orestes slay their mother, the chorus declare the command to have been issued in all justice.[62] Again, in speaking of the fate of Helen, the chorus readily believe that the gods have justly punished the royal adulteress.[63] They know, too, that Eteocles' conduct toward his brother, in refusing to yield him the royal power in turn, is audaciously unjust.[64] Similar to the view expressed by the chorus in the *Heraclidæ*, that their city possesses the path of justice, is the one set forth in the *Suppliants*, where the city is said to revere Justice.[65] When Orestes has made known his firm determination to slay Aegisthus, the chorus hail the planting of the anvil of Justice, with Fate forging the fatal blade.[66] The metaphor is typically Aeschylean and singularly forceful. In the *Agamemnon* Justice is the great teacher of sinners;[67] while in the *Choephori* there are two passages containing the phrase διὰ Δίκας, by which we are clearly to understand the goddess as issuing a command or lending her aid.[68] It is Justice who decrees that the sword of vengeance shall plunge through the heart of the murderer, or who guides with ever watchful care the words of the chorus in the utterance of right and piety.

Justice shows no partiality to wealth. Aeschylus gives a vivid comparison of the sooty but virtuous hovel with the golden albeit sin-stained mansion.[69] The material murk of the poor man's dwelling is dispelled by the spiritual brilliance of Justice, who chooses to make her home with the pious and the good, be their abode ever so humble; but the lordly edifice of the wealthy, gleaming with the splendor of material prosperity, yet cursed with the insidious sin of wanton bloodshed, is an object of utter loathing to Justice. With averted eyes she forsakes the place to enter the habitation of the holy.[70]

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[60] *Heracl.* 901.
[61] *Med.* 1231 f.
[62] *Or.* 195.
[63] *Ib.* 1361 f.
[64] *Phoen.* 258 ff.
[65] Eur. *Supp.* 379.
[66] *Cho.* 643 f.
[67] *Ag.* 250.
[68] *Cho.* 642, 787.
[69] *Ag.* 773 ff.
[70] *Ib.* 777 f.

Any display of unblushing insolence repels and disgusts the chorus. When Aegisthus voluntarily admits having slain Agamemnon, the chorus make bold to assure him that his head shall not escape the curse which it justly deserves.[71] A reverence for justice implies a wholesome, reasonable sense of fear, which all mortals should foster.[72] The chorus in the *Eumenides* consider themselves as the true dispensers of justice, and take the view that Orestes, since he has murdered his mother, has acted unjustly, and unless he is punished accordingly, the Temple of Justice will collapse. But in this play our sympathy is for Orestes and his cause; and Aeschylus undoubtedly meant it to be so. Here plainly is a case where we take issue with the chorus on the idea of retributive justice. Guided solely by the letter of the law, like Shylock, they run amuck. Justice decides in Orestes' favor, for he has obeyed Apollo's injunctions and Athena has cast the vital vote for his acquittal.

The impious act of dragging away a suppliant from the altar is, as we have already seen,[73] strictly prohibited by Justice; and in the *Supplices* the Danaids admonish the king not to dare to behold the suppliant torn from the gods' statues in defiance of justice, lest his sin rest as a curse upon his house and children. "Consider this," they say, "that Zeus' commands are just."[74] "An evil thing it is, O city," declare the elders of Marathon, "if we betray suppliant strangers at the command of our Argos. Zeus is my ally, therefore I have no fear; Zeus justly favors me."[75] In the *Supplices* Aeschylus alludes to a certain moral code comparable with our decalogue, stating that the respectful reverence on the part of children for their parents forms the third commandment written by highest-honored Justice.[76] Zeus is said to have eyes of justice;[77] and the play concludes with the following sentiment of the chorus: "I am content if heaven send that judgment side with Justice, through means of deliverance sought for by my prayers."[78] The chorus have a rebuke for Eteocles, when he insolently declares his refusal to surrender the throne to his brother: "Fair words befit not unfair deeds; this is not noble but offensive

[71] *Ag.* 1612 ff.
[72] *Eum.* 521 ff.
[73] *Heracl.* 101.
[74] Aesch. *Supp.* 429 ff.
[75] *Heracl.* 763 ff.
[76] *Supp.* 707 ff.
[77] *Ib.* 814.
[78] *Ib.* 1072 ff. Tucker.

to Justice."[79] Here Eteocles sophistically argues that to do wrong is perfectly fair, when a throne is at stake, but that the fear and love of God are in all other things absolutely essential. In the *Choephori* the chorus pray that Orestes' cause may find fulfillment "in the path that Justice treads."[80] "The man, who of his own accord and without compulsion is just, will not be unblessed; never will utter ruin seize him."[81] But the unjust man, when at last he is caught in the eddies of adversity, cries out in his struggle to the gods for deliverance; but his prayer is of no avail; to his supplications the gods are deaf.[82] The Danaids pray the gods of birth and race to bless their fate with justice, and with zealous hatred of wanton insolence to consummate for them lawful marriages.[83] The Theban maidens composing the chorus of the *Septem* entreat the gods to harken in all righteousness to their prayers,[84] for their prayers are themselves righteous.[85] "May the gods grant good fortune to our champion, Eteocles, as he goes forth in just defense of the city," plead the chorus.[86] But here we may well question whether Eteocles' conduct is justified. Our sympathy is naturally for the injured Polynices. We feel rather that his cause is justly to be espoused. We are again, as in the *Eumenides*, privileged to differ with the chorus on the idea of justice. But the chorus do not continue throughout the play to support Eteocles unanimously. At the end we detect a division of sentiment. Half the chorus in sympathy with Antigone resolve to share with her the honor of burying Polynices; while the other half continue to maintain their allegiance to Eteocles, "as the state and the right enjoin."[87] Such dissension on the part of the chorus is nowhere else in tragedy to be found, and coming from Aeschylus it seems almost heretical. Both Sophocles and Euripides preserve in their choruses complete harmony of opinion.

Orestes' interpretation of his mother's dream as related to him by the chorus meets with their ready commendation.[88] In him the chorus recognize their champion of justice, who has

[79] *Phoen.* 526 f.
[80] *Cho.* 308.
[81] *Eum.* 550 ff.
[82] *Ib.* 558 f.
[83] *Supp.* 78 ff.
[84] *Septem* 171 f.
[85] *Ib.* 626.
[86] *Ib.* 417 ff.
[87] *Ib.* 1073 f.
[88] *Cho.* 551 f.

but to command his charges and they forthwith obey. Once the chorus realize their superior to be actuated by justice, they display docility.

After Electra's mordant denunciation of her mother,[89] the chorus notice that Clytemnestra becoming angry no longer cares whether or not justice be with her. In their invocation to Athena, the chorus implore deliverance from the bane of exile, citing in support of their appeal their love of virtue and justice.[90]

In sharp contrast with the chorus' defense of Eteocles' conduct[91] stands the attitude of the Phoenician maidens toward the cause of Polynices.[92] Euripides no doubt deeply sympathized with Polynices and his feeling is consequently reflected by the chorus. Believing the cause of Polynices to be just, the chorus, we may safely assume, voiced the sentiment of the common people; and by reason of this tendency of Euripides to make himself the spokesman of public opinion, the *Phoenissæ* doubtless proved to be a far more popular play than the *Septem*.

"He, who honors the laws of the land and that justice which he has sworn by the gods to observe, makes prosperous his city; but the man who out of rashness consorts with sin makes of himself an outcast. May he neither share my hearth nor think as I do," plead the chorus of Theban elders.[93] A man should always say what is just, but in so doing should not unleash his tongue's envious sting of revilement.[94] The chorus of Bacchanals, though they are sorry for Cadmus in his bereavement, nevertheless feel that Pentheus has received due punishment for flouting Bacchus.[95] In the *Hecuba* also, the chorus bear witness to the stern retribution of justice[96]: "How intolerable, wretch, are the evils wreaked on thee! For thy disgraceful deeds, Polymestor, hath God with heavy hand laid on thee an awful penalty." Prosperity and injustice are incompatible; the safe course always demands the guidance of justice.[97] Gladly the chorus hail the death of the upstart, Lycus, who, flourishing for a time in spite of justice, at length

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[89] Soph. *El.* 558–609.
[90] *Heracl.* 775 ff.
[91] *Septem* 417 ff.
[92] *Phoen.* 258 ff.
[93] *Ant.* 369 ff.
[94] *Ph.* 1140 ff.
[95] *Bacch.* 1327 f.
[96] *Hec.* 1085 ff.
[97] *Hel.* 1030 f.

feels the vengeful hand of Heracles. Injustice cannot forever prevail. There must come a change for the better. He who once was unjustly exalted now of necessity stands before the tribunal of Justice to receive his sentence of death.[98] "Hail, O Justice!"[99] "There has come retribution which the ruler of the land never in his heart expected to suffer."[100] The base-born usurper now proves by his wretched overthrow that justice still pleases the gods.[101] So, too, the man who spurns the great altar of Justice is in turn spurned to his doom by the gods, whose ears are ever deaf to his prayers.[102] The sight of the herald who comes bringing news of Agamemnon's triumphal return is hailed by the chorus with fervent anxiety. One of the elders expresses hope of joyful tidings, while another voices his sentiment in these words: "Whoever prays for other than good news for his city, may he reap the fruit of his mind's sin!"[103] "The house that cherishes righteousness is always destined to be blessed with children."[104] The murder of her father stirs Electra to righteous indignation which ought ever to be unflinching till the guilty pay the penalty for their sin.[105] The stealth of the sinner is never a match for the vigilant mind of Retribution.[106] "Justice breathes fatal wrath upon her enemies."[107] "If a man have no fear of Justice and reap not his reward honestly, may an evil fate seize him."[108] To Pentheus the Bacchanals apply three epithets, which to them are most abhorrent: godless, lawless and wicked is he. "Let Justice come and run her sword clean through his throat!"[109] When Medea is in the throes of despondency by reason of Jason's infidelity, the chorus bid her cease worrying, for Zeus will see that her cause is duly vindicated.[110] "Ever just are the gods who allot to each mortal his fate," cry the suppliant mothers.[111] "Murder demands just requital, and the gods grant to men relief from woes unjustly suffered."[112]

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[98] *H. F.* 734 f.
[99] *Ib.* 736.
[100] *Ib.* 743 f.
[101] *Ib.* 810 ff.
[102] *Ag.* 381 ff.
[103] *Ib.* 501 f.
[104] *Ib.* 761 f.
[105] *Cho.* 455.
[106] *Ib.* 946 f.
[107] *Ib.* 952.
[108] *O. T.* 884 ff.
[109] *Bacch.* 993 f.
[110] *Med.* 157.
[111] Eur. *Supp.* 610 f.
[112] *Ib.* 614 ff.

e. Time and Justice Combined

We cannot but feel that the ideas of time and justice are often mutually complementary. In a certain description of the workings of justice, the conception of time is immediately and inevitably called up in the mind;[113] and, on the other hand, when the chorus in the *Hercules Furens*[114] aver that time has been the means of revealing Hercules' might, we instinctively feel that the justice of the hero's cause has thus been duly vindicated. The *Agamemnon* affords a striking example of this coöperation of time and justice for the consummation of right: the man who has unjustly achieved prosperity becomes the prey of the black Erinyes, who, representing Justice incarnate and aided by Time, envelop their victim in the obscuring cloud of adversity.[115] Though it may be late in coming, justice never fails.[116] So also in the form of heavy retribution, justice came in time to the sons of Priam.[117] In the *Choephori* Time may plausibly be regarded as synonymous with Justice.[118] Here it is seen to purge the hearth of its pollution, or in other words, to right the wrong. Elsewhere Aeschylus employs a striking nautical metaphor to impress upon the minds of his audience the fatal course of the unjust man: "I say that the man who transgresses in daring defiance, and acts for the most part in a random way without justice, will in time haul down his sail perforce, when trouble has overtaken him, and his yard-arms are breaking."[119] The chorus afford Electra consolation in assuring the hapless young woman that "the goddess, Justice, will soon come bearing in her hands righteous strength;"[120] and in the *Hercules Furens* the chorus speak of the usurper, Lycus, thus: "The time has come when thou shalt pay the penalty of death."[121]

Aeschylus seems to mark off three distinct periods of time when justice may visit the guilty. Sometimes it comes directly after the sin has been committed, that is to say, in the high noon of life; sometimes it tarries till twilight; sometimes it

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[113] *Cho.* 61–65.
[114] *H. F.* 805 f.
[115] *Ag.* 462 ff.
[116] *Cho.* 650 f.
[117] *Ib.* 935 f.
[118] *Ib.* 965 ff.
[119] *Eum.* 553 ff. Paley.
[120] Soph. *El.* 475 f.
[121] *H. F.* 740.

waits till the night of death before punishing the unjust.[122] When Hecuba has discovered that Polymestor is the murderer of her son, Polydorus, and has determined to exact vengeance, the chorus declare that the slayer will in due time be brought to justice, for "wherever there is liability to the laws of Heaven and of Justice, fatal misfortune awaits the guilty."[123] After Loxias has delivered his oracles, Justice, having caused some delay to intervene, brings them to fulfillment.[124] "Though the transgression be old, yet does it find quick punishment."[125]

f. Retribution

Inextricably bound up with the general idea of justice is that of retribution, which finds in the tragic chorus a staunch and fervent disciple. To the dying Lycus the chorus offer but slight consolation: "Bear up in suffering the pain of vengeance, paying the penalty for thy deeds!"[126] The unjust stand taken by Eteocles is maintained in the conduct of his successor, Creon, who refuses to grant to the Argives the right to bury their dead. This refusal was not merely unjust but even impious; for Creon thereby violated a sacred Greek custom as well as the law of war. To leave a corpse unburied was the most heinous sin a Greek could commit.[127] Great, then, was the relief the chorus felt, when retributive justice had been consummated. Adrastus, persevering in the just cause of his son-in-law, Polynices, had at last beheld the guilty duly punished.[128] In a *commos* of deep pathos, in which the young sons of the slain chiefs are assigned speaking parts, one of the children hopes he may as a warrior some day avenge his father's death;[129] while his grandmother prays that the gods may fulfill his hope.[130] An old proverb, "Suffering for the doer (sinner)," quoted by the chorus,[131] receives their implicit belief. "As long as Zeus reigns supreme, the doer shall suffer" is the slight paraphrase of this proverb,

[122] *Cho.* 61–65. The fundamental idea of Aeschylus was that where the moral balance had been upset, it must be recovered by paying for the sin, and often this payment took place in a future generation, as in the cases of the houses of Atreus and of Labdacus.

[123] *Hec.* 1029 ff.

[124] *Cho.* 953 ff.

[125] *Septem* 742 f.

[126] *H. F.* 754 f.

[127] Cf. the trial and condemnation of the six Athenian generals after the battle of Arginusæ (Xen. *Hell.* I. 6, 7).

[128] Eur. *Supp.* 731 ff.

[129] *Ib.* 1144.

[130] *Ib.* 1145.

[131] *Cho.* 313.

which the chorus give in the *Agamemnon*.[132] In the *Septem* the Theban maidens pray that Zeus the Requiter may cast upon the besiegers his wrathful glance;[133] and the Danaids give to Zeus the epithet ἑτερορρεπής, which implies that he is entirely impartial in his administration of justice, that his scales are absolutely accurate. To the wicked he sends bane, but blessing to the righteous. With the scales thus evenly poised, the Danaids wonder why Pelasgus hesitates to do them justice.[134] Have they not as suppliants taken refuge at their neighbor's hearth? And yet they fail to obtain the justice which the law duly accords them.[135] When Clytemnestra has received her death-blow from Orestes, the chorus verily believe Agamemnon to be alive beneath the earth, so strong in their minds is the idea of vengeance: here they picture Agamemnon as personally draining away the blood of his slayers.[136] Allusion to the coming murder of Clytemnestra by Orestes is made again in this form by the chorus.[137] Dishonor of the altar of Justice entails inevitable retribution.[138]

2. Scorn of Prosperity Basely Acquired

The tragic poets are well aware of man's persistent albeit perverse belief in the all-sufficient power of wealth. Prosperity, whether rightly or wrongly acquired, is, so men think, the sole means to the attainment of happiness. "Prosperity," say the chorus, "is to mortals a god and more than a god."[139] But human nature has an edifying lesson to learn in this subject from the tragic chorus. If a man think that, because of his material opulence, he can with impunity annihilate the great altar of Justice, he is sadly mistaken.[140] Granted that sometimes in the flush of his prosperity he may manage to escape the consequences of his impiety, yet will his children or his children's children be doomed to suffer in his stead.[141] Atonement is necessary and inevitable whether made by the sinner himself or his innocent posterity. But this belief is confined to the plays of Aeschylus and finds no acceptance with

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[132] *Ag.* 1563 f.
[133] *Septem* 485.
[134] *Supp.* 403 ff.
[135] *Ib.* 383 f.
[136] Soph. *El.* 1420 f.
[137] *Cho.* 649 ff.
[138] *Eum.* 540 f.
[139] *Cho.* 57 f.
[140] *Ag.* 381 ff.
[141] *Ib.* 369 ff.

Sophocles or Euripides. Justice has no respect for the power of riches;[142] fatal it is for a man to show to Justice impious dishonor for the sake of material gain.[143] By wealth and prosperity, which carry with them power for evil, are the minds of mortals corrupted.[144] The chariot of wealth is shattered in the race because the driver relies on lawlessness.[145]

3. Respect for Temporal Authority

Respect for temporal power constitutes an important aspect of the piety of the chorus. A case worthy of note is presented by the *Heraclidæ*[146]: Alcmena is about to slay Eurystheus, who has fallen into her hands, when to her great surprise the chorus inform her that by such an act she would violate the law of the land. It would therefore seem at this point in the play that the chorus put the observance of the law above their desire for the fulfillment of justice. But in reality this is not so, for the conclusion of the play reveals the chorus in sympathy with Alcmena.[147] In the eyes of the chorus, the tomb of Agamemnon is an altar before which they pay solemn reverence.[148] Their mistress, Electra, having bidden them advise her on her speech at the tomb, finds the chorus readily obedient.[149] In preparation for the murder of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, the chorus urge Orestes to give them his commands, for they will faithfully execute them all.[150] Piqued at the curiosity of the nurse to learn of Orestes' fate, the chorus impatiently and angrily bid her obey the orders of Clytemnestra to summon Aegisthus.[151] For Clytemnestra's power the chorus show profound respect, since they deem it only right to honor the king's consort, when the king's throne stands vacant.[152] The slavery, to which the chorus of the *Choephori* have been reduced, calls forth from them no bitter complaint, inasmuch as they believe their hapless plight to have been caused by the gods. Obey their masters they must, whether justly so or not. Yet secretly they grieve over the sins of their rulers.[153] The reference of the

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[142] *Ag.* 780.
[143] *Eum.* 540 f.
[144] *H. F.* 774 ff.
[145] *Ib.* 779 f.
[146] *Heracl.* 961 ff.
[147] *Ib.* 1053.
[148] *Cho.* 106.
[149] *Ib.* 107.
[150] *Ib.* 552 f.
[151] *Ib.* 779.
[152] *Ag.* 258 ff.
[153] *Cho.* 75 ff.

Danaids to King Pelasgus as the embodiment of the city and commonwealth[154] reminds one forcibly of the dictum of Louis XIV: "L'état, c'est moi." Such is the devotion of the Bacchanals to their god, that, despite their innate tendency to obey implicitly their superiors, they essay to apprise King Pentheus in a spirit of proud defiance of their unwavering belief in the supremacy of Dionysus.[155]

But if we would seek the most salient manifestation of this characteristic of the chorus, we must turn to the *Persæ*, that curious and unique play, curious by reason of its strange confusion of Greek and Oriental manners, and unique in that it depicts an historical subject. To the Persians the royal family is divine. But this is not at all astonishing, when we reflect that among all Oriental peoples blind deference to authority and strict observance of caste relations are only natural. The splendor of Queen Atossa is compared by the chorus to the eyes of the gods, and, as she draws near, they duly prostrate themselves.[156] In greeting the queen the chorus are careful to address her as "consort of a god and mother of a god;"[157] and they assure her of their unalloyed devotion to her interests.[158]

4. Power of the Gods

The power and majesty of the gods constitute a favorite theme for the chorus' praise. "Never in my sight will the gods appear inferior to mortals."[159] "I say that no man has ever enjoyed prosperity or suffered tribulation save by the will of the gods."[160] Iolaus, in despair over Macaria's noble self-sacrifice, is bidden by the chorus to take courage and endure the buffetings of the gods.[161] Her meritorious example of martyrdom should inspire the old man with righteous pride rather than with bitter anguish. Commiserating Hecuba in her hapless predicament, the chorus attest the heavy hand of God;[162] while the dread misfortune that has visited the city and house of Priam is due wholly to the irresistible decree of

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[154] Aesch. *Supp.* 370.

[155] *Bacch.* 775 ff.

[156] *Pers.* 150 ff.

[157] *Ib.* 157.

[158] *Ib.* 175.

[159] *Heracl.* 768 f. The word δαίμονες does not occur in the MSS., but the context shows it to be an almost certain emendation.

[160] *Ib.* 608 f.

[161] *Ib.* 619.

[162] *Hec.* 721 f.

the gods.[163] "To the gods all things are easy."[164] The chorus of Theban maidens pray them to stem the tide of mad conflict that threatens to break forth between Polynices and Eteocles, and to bring the brothers to a reconciliation.[165] To win the victory fully satisfies the chorus, but if the gods can give them still more joy, they ask to be so blessed.[166] When, however, the messenger has brought the news of the death of Eteocles and his brother, the chorus at once realize that the gods have fulfilled Oedipus' curses.[167] The suppliant mothers of the chiefs slain before Thebes, on learning of the downfall of the enemy, voice their firm belief in the gods, now that they have beheld the day they never expected to see.[168] As Lycus utters his death cry, the chorus, with bold pride, ask who the wretched mortal was, who dared declare that the gods have no power.[169] "What fairer gift can the gods bestow on men than victory over their enemies?" query the Bacchanals.[170] "Slowly but surely moves the might of Heaven to school those mortals who exalt their unbelief and who, in the madness of their thoughts, honor not the gods."[171] "To their will man is ever subject; great is their power."[172] Peleus' woe has come by decree of Heaven.[173] The chorus bring into sharp contrast the uncertainty of human affairs and the never-failing word of the gods.[174] Electra's recognition of her brother prompts the chorus to declare that the gods are bringing them victory.[175] The failure of Castor and Pollux to avert their sister's calamity is to the chorus a matter of great surprise. Why couldn't they, being gods, save her? But Castor replies that her deliverance is impossible by dint of Necessity's decree and Phoebus' oracle.[176] The pious and the wicked alike receive from the gods their respective rewards.[177] Success is assured when the gods grant to mortals their favor;[178] but over-confidence, the chorus think, is not to be sought, for the gods often veer in their course.[179]

[163] *Hec.* 583 f.
[164] *Phoen.* 689.
[165] *Ib.* 586 f.
[166] *Ib.* 1200 f.
[167] *Ib.* 1425 f.
[168] Eur. *Supp.* 731 ff.
[169] *H. F.* 757 ff.
[170] *Bacch.* 877 ff.
[171] *Ib.* 882 ff.
[172] *Or.* 1545 ff.
[173] *Andr.* 1203.
[174] *Hel.* 1149 f.
[175] Eur. *El.* 589 ff.
[176] *Ib.* 1298 ff.
[177] *H. F.* 772 f.
[178] *Rh.* 317 f.
[179] *Ib.* 332.

Thus do the chorus forewarn the sanguine Hector, yet they hope that the gods will fight on their side and so grant them the victory.[180] With this wish the *Rhesus* concludes. In their grief over the impending fate of Alcestis and Admetus, the chorus seek consolation in prayer. "Let us pray to the gods; supreme is their power."[181]

The fickleness of fortune is to be attributed to the will of the gods. It is they who consummate the unexpected and withhold that which is confidently expected.[182] "The Trojans have felt the blow of Zeus; they have fared as he willed."[183] 'Tis the gods who granted Agamemnon to capture the city of Priam, and who honored him with a triumphant return to his native land.[184] From the gods, too, the interpreters of dreams derive their mantic power.[185] As Electra despairingly utters her dirge at the tomb of her father, she is minded by the chorus that the gods may haply turn her threnody into a song of triumph.[186] Ever in sympathy with those who innocently suffer, the chorus seek to assuage their misfortune by words of hope and encouragement. The gods have guided Orestes through all his trials and tribulations, so that he has persisted resolutely in his pursuit of the goal of justice.[187] "The gods hold supreme sway, because they do not aid the wicked in wickedness."[188] "What mortal man can baffle the gods?" cry the chorus, confidently believing that the gods have granted the Persians to be ever victorious.[189] Orestes' deed of vengeance calls forth the blessing of the chorus, who, on his departure, pray that the gods may watch over him with kindly eyes and protect him with happy fortune.[190] In their lamentation over the disastrous expedition of Xerxes, the chorus realize that their woes have been sent by the gods.[191] Their sanguine hopes also have been cruelly shattered by the gods.[192] To Eteocles' disparaging remarks about the gods, the chorus make a fitting rejoinder in the tribute which they pay to the invincible strength of the

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[180] *Rh.* 995 f.
[181] *Alc.* 217.
[182] *Ib.* 1159 ff.
[183] *Ag.* 367 ff.
[184] *Ib.* 1335 ff.
[185] *Cho.* 37 f.
[186] *Ib.* 340 ff.
[187] *Ib.* 939 ff.
[188] *Ib.* 958 f.
[189] *Pers.* 93.
[190] *Cho.* 1063 f.
[191] *Pers.* 573, 581.
[192] *Ib.* 1004 ff.

immortals.[193] "It is they alone who have made impregnable the city in which we dwell."[194] The Theban maidens implore their local gods for safety and deliverance.[195] This individualization of belief is, as E. Petersen has well pointed out,[196] a clearly marked phenomenon in the invocations and declarations of the chorus. "Unhappy is he whose house the gods have shaken."[197] The curse that abides in a family from generation to generation works its baneful effect through the gods.[198] Their forms of chastisement, characterized by Sophocles as "fleet of foot,"[199] are sure to visit the wicked.[200] Though commiserating Antigone and her father, yet, through fear of the power of the gods, the chorus feel unable to tell them more than they have already told.[201] "What the gods send to mortals must be consummated," the chorus consolingly remind Admetus, when in reality good fortune, in the form of his wife rescued from Death, smiles upon him.[202] He who unhesitatingly shows obedience to the gods shall have a life free from sorrow.[203] To mitigate the anxiety of Deianeira over the absence of Heracles, the chorus evince their certainty of his safety. Though he may fall into extreme danger, yet some god is careful to keep Heracles free from the clutches of Death.[204]

The power of love, personified either as Cypris or her son, Eros, is amply acknowledged in the sentiments of the chorus. Not only mortal man is subject to Love's sway; even the immortal gods yield to the charms of Aphrodite.[205] Sometimes, however, out of deference to the gods' might, the chorus refrain from telling of Aphrodite's conquest of her fellow-immortals.[206]

"True divination comes to him who has the gods for friends."[207] While visiting the temple of Apollo at Delphi, the handmaids of Creusa are given instructions by Ion as to where and where not they may go; whereupon they assure Ion of implicit obedience. "What the gods have ordained we do not transgress."[208]

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[193] *Septem* 226.
[194] *Ib.* 233.
[195] *Ib.* 239, 299 f., 807 f.
[196] *Die Attische Tragoedie*, 1915, pp. 150 f.
[197] *Ant.* 583 f.
[198] *Ib.* 593 f.
[199] *Ib.* 1104.
[200] *Ib.* 1103 f.
[201] *O. C.* 254 ff.
[202] *Alc.* 1071.
[203] *Bacch.* 1002 ff.
[204] *Tr.* 119 f.
[205] *Hipp.* 1268 ff.; *Ant.* 785 ff.
[206] *Tr.* 498 ff.
[207] *Hel.* 759 f.
[208] *Ion* 231.

Stunned by the heartrending news of their mistress' sorry plight, the chorus give way to despair, from which they can be delivered only by the gods' help.[209] Again and again the chorus cry to the gods who are the best and surest trust for those in fear.[210] "O that some god would give me wings, that I might fly in triumph to Thebes!" plead the mothers of the slain chiefs.[211]

5. Majesty of Individual Gods

But it is not only the powers and prerogatives of the gods as a collective unit, which receive sincere and hearty recognition from the chorus; those of individual deities are equally glorified, for frequently under the stress of circumstances the chorus feel the need of exalting the attributes of some particular god. Thus the Danaids, by their pious utterances, render a glowing panegyric of Zeus; while the *Bacchæ* constitutes perhaps the noblest eulogy of Dionysus in all Greek literature. Naturally enough, in the ardor of their zeal and devotion, the Bacchanals declare Dionysus to be inferior to no other god.[212] When Cassandra informs the chorus of Mycenæan elders of Apollo's love for her, they are fairly astounded that a great god like him should have been smitten with a passion for a mere mortal.[213] Such a thing, they imply, could not be.

In general, however, the chorus appear to uphold the orthodox idea of the supremacy of Zeus. He is the cause and executor of all things; nothing is fulfilled without Zeus.[214] The daughters of Oceanus speak of Zeus as the "disposer of all things."[215] "Never shall the counsels of mortals surpass the harmony of Zeus."[216] They also sharply contrast the weakness of mortals with the power of the gods.[217] When they think of Io's hapless plight, they are minded to hope that they will never suffer a like fate. Their desire is to avoid marriage with gods of greater power and its consequent misfortunes, for they, like Io, would be unable to escape the design of Zeus.[218] The Theban maidens

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[209] *Ion.* 1243 f.
[210] Eur. *Supp.* 626 f.
[211] *Ib.* 620 f.
[212] *Bacch.* 777.
[213] *Ag.* 1204.
[214] *Ib.* 1485 ff.
[215] *P. V.* 528; cf. *Tr.* 126.
[216] *Ib.* 551.
[217] *Ib.* 545, 549 f.
[218] *Ib.* 898 ff.

implore almighty Zeus to confound their foes;[219] and when the victory has been assured them, they bestow high praise upon their ruler, Eteocles, who, "next to mighty Zeus and the other gods, has been most instrumental in saving the city from destruction."[220] Zeus' power is completely immune to any restrictive influence that mortal man might through transgression dare to impose on it.[221] Zeus rules all things and his rule is deathless.[222] In her sad yearning for the return of Orestes, Electra receives hearty compassion from the chorus: "Courage, child, courage! Still great in heaven is Zeus, who oversees and governs all things; to him commit thy bitter wrath."[223] "Some day the famed land of Mycenæ will receive Orestes coming hither under the kindly guidance of Zeus."[224] The ruler, to whom Zeus entrusts his divine scepter, excels all others in skill and wisdom.[225] Whenever the stroke of Zeus comes on Ajax, the chorus become gravely apprehensive.[226] The wrath of Zeus, the god of suppliants, mortals should be careful not to incur, as the Danaids expressly remind us,[227] for it is "heavy"[228] and "abiding."[229] So the Theban maidens pray that Zeus may cast a wrathful glance on their enemies.[230]

6. Fear of the Gods

A sense of hesitation or fear is a natural concomitant of the chorus' piety. The Theban elders tremble at the mention of the Furies.[231] The mariners of Salamis liken their fear for Ajax to that of the timid dove;[232] while they feel keen anxiety over his grief, due, they believe, to the sinister stroke of some god.[233] Through dread of the judgment of the gods, the chorus dare not violate religious custom for the sake of Oedipus.[234] The elders of Colonus show great trepidation at Zeus' thunder and lightning: "I am afraid; for never does the flash rush

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[219] *Septem* 255; cf. Aesch. *Supp.* 816.
[220] *Ib.* 1074 ff.
[221] *Ant.* 605.
[222] *O. T.* 904 f.
[223] Soph. *El.* 174 ff.; cf. *O. C.* 1085 ff.
[224] *Ib.* 160 ff.
[225] *Ph.* 137 ff.
[226] *Aj.* 137 ff.
[227] Aesch. *Supp.* 427.
[228] *Ib.* 346, 651.
[229] *Ib.* 385.
[230] *Septem* 485.
[231] *O. C.* 126.
[232] *Aj.* 139 f.
[233] *Ib.* 278 f.
[234] *O. C.* 256 f.

forth in vain or without serious consequence. O great sky! O Zeus!"[235] The daughters of Oceanus attribute the misery of Prometheus to his utter disregard of Zeus and his excessive zeal for the welfare of man.[236] When contemplating the dire affliction which jealous Hera has laid on poor, mortal Io, they are seized with fear;[237] and with much misgiving, they ask the rash Prometheus if Zeus might possibly some day be dethroned, showing utter amazement at the revolutionary sentiments of the friend of man.[238] "But why should I be afraid of Zeus?" replies the recalcitrant immortal; "I am prepared for anything." "Ah! but wise are they," rejoin the chorus, "who worship Adrastea." This remark, however, only provokes a contemptuous retort from Prometheus: "Worship, supplicate, cower still before the one now in power; but as for me, I care even less than nothing for Zeus. Let him do as he pleases and hold power a little while; for he won't rule the gods for long."[239] As the Theban maidens catch the sound of Polynices' onslaught, they turn with dread in their hearts to the supplication of the gods.[240] Despite their fear of uttering words of freedom in the presence of King Pentheus, and in defiance of secular law of which he is the outward and visible embodiment and to which they usually show implicit obedience, the Bacchanals cherish a devotion to their divinity, Dionysus, which proves too strong for suppression.[241] The old men of Marathon are overjoyed to behold the day that delivers them from their dread fear of the enemy;[242] while the Phoenician maidens, though really in sympathy with the cause of Polynices, yet proclaim their dread of the Argive might and the hand of Heaven.[243] Twice the Theban maidens express their fear of the fulfillment by the Erinys of the awful curse resting on Oedipus' family.[244] "Sometimes awe should remain enthroned, keeping a close watch over the hearts of men," declare the Eumenides.[245]

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[235] *O. C.* 1469 ff.
[236] *P. V.* 542 ff.
[237] *Ib.* 898 ff.
[238] *Ib.* 930 ff.
[239] *Ib.* 933 ff. Adrastea is another name for Nemesis (Strabo xiii. 1, 13) and the daughter of Zeus (*Rh.* 342).
[240] *Septem* 214.
[241] *Bacch.* 775 ff.
[242] *Heracl.* 867 f.
[243] *Phoen.* 256 ff.
[244] *Septem* 720 ff., 790 f.
[245] *Eum.* 517 ff.

7. Hatred of ὕβρις

Tragedy offers abundant evidence of the chorus' hatred of insolence (ὕβρις). Aeschylus, with his fondness for personification, makes Insolence the offspring of Impiety.[246] It is unholy insolence that Pentheus hurls at Bromius to the horrification of the Bacchanals.[247] To Lycus' outrageous conduct toward his betters is due his wretched ruin.[248] When the gods allow the wicked to enjoy prosperity, the sin of wanton insolence inevitably follows; and under its pernicious spell they are deluded into thinking and believing that fair fortune will ever smile kindly on them.[249] It was impious arrogance on the part of Creon and his followers that sealed the sad fate of Thebes.[250] The suppliant mothers feel the terrible blot of outrage that has rested on their city, while their sons have remained unburied.[251] In allusion to the fatal course of Eurystheus, the chorus exclaim: "Far from me be pride and a spirit insatiate."[252] It is just this ὕβρις, the Danaids declare, that has excited the sons of Aegyptus to their mad pursuit; and they entreat the king to recognize it, thus sparing himself the misfortune of incurring the anger of Zeus.[253] It is this ὕβρις, too, which maliciously prompts a man to profane the great altar of Justice.[254] When come to old age, Insolence begets its progeny in the wicked man, and thus perpetuates its baleful family.[255] In their greeting of Rhesus, the chorus of Trojan sentinels pray Nemesis to keep evil presumption from their lips.[256] The Theban elders also pray that the man who appears haughty in word or deed may suffer an evil fate for his pride.[257] "Insolence," they aver, "begets the tyrant; dire is its doom."[258] "The punishment which the haughty suffer for their overweening words teaches wisdom in old age": with this sentiment the *Antigone* concludes.[259]

8. Humility

But in proportion as they show repugnance to pride and insolence, the chorus seek to cultivate humility and sincerity.

[246] *Eum.* 534.
[247] *Bacch.* 374 f.
[248] *H. F.* 741.
[249] Eur. *Supp.* 463 f.
[250] *Ib.* 511 f.
[251] *Ib.* 631 ff.
[252] *Heracl.* 926 f.
[253] *Supp.* 426 f.
[254] *Ag.* 383 f.
[255] *Ib.* 764 f.
[256] *Rh.* 342 f.
[257] *O. T.* 883 ff.
[258] *Ib.* 873 ff.
[259] *Ant.* 1350 ff.

Humbly do the Argive women ask the Dioscuri if it is lawful for mere mortals to address them.[260] The prosperous man, who fails to nurture his heart with humility, is sure to show sooner or later disrespect of right.[261] With humility are joined love of peace and abhorrence of strife. In fact Ares, as god of war, finds no favor with the chorus. Hearing the rattle of the foe's spears, the Theban maidens feel that Ares will betray his country.[262] He can in no wise withstand the power of Fate,[263] and his banishment from the land, nay, his very death the chorus ardently desire.[264]

The view held by later Epicurean philosophers, that the gods dwell far away in heaven and have no concern in the affairs of mortals, is in the eyes of the Mycenæan elders glaringly impious.[265] Here the chorus allude to the god-sent curse on the family of Priam because of Paris' sin. The gods, to be sure, dwell far away in heaven, but at the same time they watch over the lives of men.[266] "Not unaware are the gods of those who commit much bloodshed."[267] "In no place," says Petersen,[268] "are the primitive pious beliefs of the people better illustrated than in the view expressed everywhere in Greek tragedy, that man must be favorable to the higher powers that watch over his life, and must never neglect them."

9. Abhorrence of Religious Pollution

Quite familiar to the tragic chorus is the idea of religious defilement and its healing purgation. A vivid illustration of this idea is to be found in the *Agamemnon*, where the chorus openly accuse Aegisthus of polluting justice.[269] In the *Septem* Ares, as god of war, defiles piety.[270] "Beware of pollution!" the chorus warn the Argive king;[271] and in the *Suppliants* the chorus pray the city of Pallas not to defile the laws of mortals.[272] The elders of Mycenæ call Clytemnestra "the pollution of her country and of her native gods";[273] while the old men of

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[260] Eur. *El.* 1292 f.
[261] *Eum.* 521 f.
[262] *Septem* 105.
[263] *Ant.* 951 f.
[264] *O. T.* 190 ff.
[265] *Ag.* 369 ff.
[266] *Bacch.* 392 ff.
[267] *Ag.* 461 f.
[268] *Op. cit.* p. 154.
[269] *Ag.* 1669.
[270] *Septem* 344.
[271] Aesch. *Supp.* 375.
[272] Eur. *Supp.* 378.
[273] *Ag.* 1645.

Colonus, on beholding the blind Oedipus in the grove of the Furies, invoke Zeus the Guardian, since they at once assume that Oedipus is, as it were, a plague polluting their hallowed precinct.[274] In the *Choephori* the chorus speak of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra as "two defilers."[275] "Indelible is the pollution caused by the death of brothers slain each by the other," cry the Theban maidens.[276] And when Orestes embraces Iphigenia, the chorus are appalled at the sight, for they believe that in so doing Orestes has defiled the sacred person of Artemis' priestess.[277]

10. Moral Restraint (οὐ θέμις)

The idea of moral restraint inherent in the expression οὐ (μὴ) θέμις occurs frequently in the choral odes, and is aptly suggestive of the prohibitory commandments of the decalogue. The chorus know of only one haven of safety—the altar—for Creusa in her flight from her death-threatening pursuers; there as suppliant she may thwart her would-be murderers, for the law says, "Thou shalt not slay the suppliant."[278] The inability of mortal man to escape his destiny is due to Themis, the personification of divine law; while the consequences of violating the seventh Hebraic commandment are graphically foretold by the chorus in the case of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.[279] "Thou shalt not commit adultery" was as scrupulously observed by the orthodox Greek as by the orthodox Hebrew. The elders of Colonus are aghast to find Oedipus on forbidden ground in the sacred grove of the Furies. With their characteristically sympathetic attitude, they are ready to aid the blind old man as best they may, but before they dare hold converse with him, he must leave the holy precinct. "Speak to us," enjoin the chorus, "where 'tis lawful for all; but, till then, hold thy tongue."[280] The Theban maidens feel sure that Eteocles' temerity will drive him on to unlawful murder.[281] "Man may not lawfully transgress what Zeus makes holy," declare the Choephori in allusion to the guilty deeds of Clytemnestra and her paramour.[282]

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[274] *O. C.* 142.
[275] *Cho.* 944.
[276] *Septem* 734 ff.
[277] *I. T.* 798 f.
[278] *Ion* 1255 f.
[279] Soph. *El.* 492 f.
[280] *O. C.* 166 ff.
[281] *Septem* 692 ff.
[282] *Cho.* 644 f.

11. Strict Observance of Ritual Forms

A notable aspect of the chorus' orthodoxy consists in their punctilious observance of all conventional ritual. In their supplication to the gods for happy deliverance, the Theban maidens beseech them to be mindful of the rites and sacrifices, which the people have unfailingly performed.[283] If Eteocles would only yield to the entreaties of the chorus and pay due sacrifice to the gods, desisting from his mad determination to meet his brother in deadly conflict, the dread curse that haunts his family would vanish.[284] But in his reply, Eteocles impiously declares that the gods have slighted him. After the murder of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, the chorus bid Orestes cleanse his hands and supplicate Loxias, that he may thereby set his mind at ease.[285] A striking example of the knowledge of orthodox ritual possessed by the chorus is furnished by a passage in the *Oedipus Coloneus*,[286] where Oedipus asks the elders how to make atonement to the Eumenides for having trespassed on their holy ground. Scrupulously careful they are not to omit the slightest minutiæ of this ceremony; and if Oedipus carries out these rites, they will boldly stand by him; but if he fails, they fear a dreadful fate will await him. For Atossa's disquieting dream the chorus have a ready and effective remedy:[287] first she must supplicate the gods, in order that they may send her their blessing; then pour a libation to Earth and the Dead; and finally ask her deceased husband to send to her and Xerxes good things from the lower world. This last ceremony is performed also by Electra in her prayer to Agamemnon.[288] With the capture of Orestes and Pylades, the chorus invoke Artemis to accept the sacrifice of the strangers, which, though accounted unholy in Greece, is strongly sanctioned and enjoined by the Tauric law;[289] and in their prayer to Athena to stop the advance of the impious Eurystheus and his army, the old men of Marathon proudly remind the goddess of the sacrificial rites, which they perform regularly every month in her honor.[290]

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[283] *Septem* 178.
[284] *Ib.* 699 ff.
[285] *Cho.* 1059 f.
[286] *O. C.* 466–492.
[287] *Pers.* 216–225.
[288] *Cho.* 147.
[289] *I. T.* 463 ff.
[290] *Heracl.* 777 ff.

12. Faith in the Gods

The plays of Euripides stress the chorus' deep faith in the gods. In the *Hippolytus* the chorus declare that through the power of faith griefs are banished and life becomes simple and pleasant, but doubt brings only perplexity and vicissitude; accordingly they pray the gods to grant them a wholesome faith among life's blessings.[291] The Theban elders, though they had always disbelieved the story of Zeus' marriage with mortal Alcmena, are finally through the revelation of Heracles' saving might won over to faith.[292] Despairingly the Corinthian ladies bewail the lack of faith in the gods among mortals.[293] Such faith, declare the suppliant mothers, is the first aid of the sore afraid.[294]

13. Prayer

Prayer, too, the chorus uphold and enjoin. To them its efficacy is ever unfailing. By prayer fate may be induced to come quicker or easier.[295] "Your office is prayer," Cassandra tells the chorus of Mycenæan elders.[296] When Clytemnestra has finished the first recital of her story of the fall of Troy, the chorus at once declare their intention to thank the gods through prayer for the Greek victory; but so elated do they feel, that before their prayer they eagerly desire Clytemnestra to tell them the story over again.[297] This done, they are ready to address themselves to the gods.[298] The chorus of Trojan women admonish Hecuba to supplicate the gods for the deliverance of her captive daughter, for only through prayer may she be happily restored.[299]

14. Appeals to Tradition

Appeals to tradition are not at all uncommon with the chorus. Glad they are to be rid of the upstart, Lycus, the mere creature of a day. The ancient line comes again into its own and sacred tradition is thus preserved.[300] Lycus they characterize as an "utterly base parvenu."[301] Conservatism, ever linked with piety,

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[291] *Hipp.* 1102 f., 1114.
[292] *H. F.* 802 ff.
[293] *Med.* 413 f.
[294] Eur. *Supp.* 627.
[295] *Cho.* 465.
[296] *Ag.* 1250.
[297] *Ib.* 317 ff.
[298] *Ib.* 353.
[299] *Hec.* 146 ff.
[300] *H. F.* 768 ff.
[301] *Ib.* 257.

is dear indeed to the hearts of the chorus. The Furies, who act as plaintiff in the suit against Orestes, accuse his protector, Apollo, of destroying the good old order of things and beguiling with wine the ancient goddesses.[302] The gods now in power are arrant upstarts, who ride down the laws of old and shamelessly deprive the Eumenides of their rightful prerogatives.[303] Endowed with hoary wisdom, as they proudly boast, the Erinyes deem their defeat at the hands of Apollo and Athena the most humiliating degradation.[304] Through irresistible wiles have the gods wrested from them their immemorial rights.[305] The quotation of ancient proverbs constitutes cogent evidence of the chorus' hearty and reverent observance of things traditional. The moral doctrine that suffering is the inevitable reward of sin is enthusiastically believed and preached by Aeschylus.[306] The upright and virtuous man, on the other hand, remains ever wholly immune to misery.[307] This view, however, as James Adam[308] has convincingly shown, does not find acceptance with Sophocles. Suffering, according to Sophocles, is not incompatible with moral innocence. The *Antigone* brings this out forcefully. In the same play the chorus give expression to the proverb uttered by some wise man of olden time, that "evil seems good, soon or late, to him whose mind the god draws to mischief; and but for the briefest space doth he fare free of woe."[309] A fine example of the chorus' love of tradition is offered also by a beautiful ode [310] descriptive of the good old days of Erechtheus, when all was peace and happiness. So, too, in the *Choephori* the captive handmaids contrast the happy past when "reverential awe, which baffles war, subjugation and battle," was shown to righteous kings with the unhappy present when humble respect gives way to cringing fear.[311]

15. Belief in Dreams, Oracles, etc.

In keeping with their strict adherence to form in the celebration of various religious rites, the chorus show themselves

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[302] *Eum.* 727 f.
[303] *Ib.* 778 f.
[304] *Ib.* 837 ff.
[305] *Ib.* 845 f.
[306] *Ag.* 1564; *Cho.* 313 f., where it is called a "thrice-old saw."
[307] *Ag.* 761 f.
[308] *Religious Teachers of Greece*, 1908, pp. 167 ff.
[309] *Ant.* 620 ff. Jebb.
[310] *Med.* 824 ff.
[311] *Cho.* 54 ff.

credulous of dreams, oracles and portents. They feel sure that Clytemnestra's dream bodes ill for her and her paramour: "Verily mortals cannot read the future in fearful dreams or oracles, if this vision of the night find not due fulfillment."[312] The elders of Mycenæ make grateful acknowledgment of the prophetic art of Calchas[313] and of Cassandra.[314] The readers of dreams derive their mantic power from the gods; hence their prophecies must needs be true.[315] The mystery shrouding the death of Laius can surely be cleared, the chorus declare, by the seer, Tiresias. For him the chorus show the deepest reverence: he stands next to Phoebus in prophetic utterance; of all mortals he is best able to enlighten the bewildered mind of Oedipus and alas! bring about his wretched end; "Tiresias, the godlike prophet, in whom alone of men resides truth," will not fail to convict the murderer of Laius.[316] The hoary Theban elders confidently aver that, as long as they have lived, Tiresias has never once been a false prophet to their city.[317] Again they duly acknowledge Tiresias' mantic power, when they learn of Hæmon's death;[318] while the Bacchanals praise the blind seer thus: "Thou, old man, dost not shame Phoebus by thy words and dost prudently honor the great god, Bromius."[319] The Trachinian maidens, sure that Heracles is no more, recall with innate faith the divine prophecy as to his labors and the time of their fulfillment.[320]

16. Knowledge of Myths

It is only natural and right to assume on the part of the orthodox tragic chorus a familiar knowledge of the myths of their people. Frequently the choral odes celebrate mythological subjects.[321]

17. Sentiments of Piety Proper (εὐσέβεια)

But nearest and dearest to the hearts of the chorus are sentiments of pure piety. This ethical concept, indeed, rather than

[312] Soph. *El.* 499 ff. Jebb.
[313] *Ag.* 249.
[314] *Ib.* 1213.
[315] *Cho.* 37 f.
[316] *O. T.* 284 ff., 297 ff.
[317] *Ant.* 1092 ff.
[318] *Ib.* 1178.
[319] *Bacch.* 328 f.
[320] *Tr.* 821 ff.
[321] Cf. Eur. *El.* 432 ff.; *O. C.* 668 ff., 1044 ff.

moderation (σωφροσύνη) is fundamental with Sophocles.[322] Feeling compassion for Philoctetes and desiring to render him aid, the Scyrian sailors seek from the wounded hero a kindly response to their overtures by appealing to his sense of piety.[323] "Wretched may that man be," declare the Theban elders, "who disdains to worship reverently the statues of the gods."[324] The presence of the blind Oedipus in the sacred grove of the Furies outrages the chorus' sense of piety:[325] "A wanderer that old man must have been,—a wanderer, not a dweller in the land; else never would he have advanced into this untrodden grove of the maidens with whom none may strive, whose name we tremble to speak, by whom we pass with eyes turned away, moving our lips, without sound or word, in still devotion." In the *Antigone* the elders of Thebes, acting as the apologists of Creon, while granting that Antigone possesses a sort of piety in her reverence for Polynices, still deem her culpable for having infringed the law of the State;[326] and among the sage remarks with which the play concludes, the chorus make this: "No impiety must ever be displayed toward things divine."[327] The Theban elders in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* pray that wholesome rivalry, which benefits the State, may never be destroyed by the god; never will they cease holding the god for their protector.[328]

That masterful play, the *Bacchæ*, which by its apology of orthodoxy renders so difficult the true decision as to Euripides' attitude toward religion, in view of his well-known tendency to disparage and scorn tradition, contains abundant evidence of the chorus' love of piety. "Blessed is he," cry the Bacchanals, "who, happy in his knowledge of the gods' mysteries, is pure in life and religious in soul, with holy purification holding revel in the mountains."[329] Pentheus' remark, that no good comes of the Bacchanals' revelry, is characterized by them as blasphemous: "Hast thou no reverence, stranger, for the gods?" they boldly ask Pentheus.[330] Aghast at the persistent impious scoffing of Pentheus, the chorus invoke Sanctity, ruler of the

[322] Adam *op. cit.* p. 164.
[323] *Ph.* 1162 f.
[324] *O. T.* 885 ff.
[325] *O. C.* 123 ff. Jebb.
[326] *Ant.* 872 ff.
[327] *Ib.* 1349 f.
[328] *O. T.* 879 ff.
[329] *Bacch.* 72 ff.
[330] *Ib.* 263.

gods, that she may haply quell the king's profane utterances.[331] At sound of Dionysus' voice, his votaries proclaim their pious worship.[332] "Subtly do the gods conceal time's long foot and hunt down the impious; for 'tis not meet to think and to do more than the law allows. For paltry is the expense of believing that whatever is sent from the gods and gains the sanction of time and nature has power supreme."[333] In impious mood and lawless wrath comes Pentheus to wreak havoc on the sacred orgies of Bacchus; mad is his heart and frenzied his mind. "Free from envy I rejoice in my quest of wisdom and of other great and ever visible goals; I strive to live in piety and holiness following noble ways from dawn to nightfall and, spurning the things made outcast by Justice, to honor the gods."[334]

To the importunate Copreus the elders of Marathon declare the impiety of casting off the stranger suppliants, who have sought from their city the right of sanctuary;[335] and they upbraid him for his failure to show respect to their free land and for his impious desire to violate the right of the suppliant.[336] The heroic self-sacrifice of Macaria, revealing the maiden's pious convictions and unswerving devotion to the cause of her father, evokes from the chorus unstinted praise;[337] while in a subsequent ode, they admonish their city never to cease honoring the gods.[338] The handmaids of Creusa, having received their instructions from Ion as to what parts of the temple they may and may not visit, make haste to say they will not transgress the law of the god. "Ah!" they cry, "how I ever hate wicked men, who, weaving unjust wiles, then deck them forth with fair-seeming trappings; give me every time for a friend the lowly but honest man in preference to the villain of cleverer wits."[339] "Where else than to the altar shouldst thou flee for safety?" the chorus ask distraught Creusa.[340] "Upon the altar now take thy seat, for if there thou art slain, thou shalt curse thy murderers with blood-guiltiness."[341] The play con-

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[331] *Bacch.* 370 ff.
[332] *Ib.* 589 f.
[333] *Ib.* 888 ff.
[334] *Ib.* 997 ff.
[335] *Heracl.* 107 f.
[336] *Ib.* 111 ff.
[337] *Ib.* 629.
[338] *Ib.* 902 f.
[339] *Ion* 832 ff.
[340] *Ib.* 1255.
[341] *Ib.* 1258 ff.

cludes with an invocation to Apollo, in which the chorus voice their faith in the power of good over evil, and exhort the man smitten with tribulation ardently to worship the gods. In the *Iphigenia at Aulis* the chorus of Chalcidian women complain of the rampant godlessness and disrespect of the law which now flourish, because such an unspeakable thing as the sacrifice of Iphigenia is permitted to take place.[342] With joy the Theban elders hail the end of the impious Lycus;[343] while the chorus of Argive women gently reproach Electra thus: "Dost think that by thy tears alone, without honoring the gods, thou shalt prevail over thy enemies? Not by wails but by prayerful worship of the gods shalt thou have the victory, my child."[344] In ecstasy over the return of Orestes, the chorus exclaim to Electra: "Lift up thy hands and voice, and send forth prayers to the gods for the safety of thy brother!"[345] "Right it is," declare the chorus of captive handmaids, "to show reverence to the rule of the heaven-dwellers";[346] while they call Clytemnestra an "impious woman."[347]

The Danaids, imploring their father not to forsake them, contrast their piety with the impiety of their pursuers: "With impious hearts they, like carrion crows, profane the gods' altars."[348] "No fear of these tridents and thunderbolts of the gods will restrain them, father, from laying hands on us. Arrogant beyond endurance, they rage like mad hounds with unholy wrath, giving no ear to the gods. Their anger is that of lascivious, impious monsters."[349] Stunned by the herald's announcement of the arrival of Aegyptus' sons, the Danaids, with fervent appeal to Pelasgus for help, cry out: "We are undone, O King, we, the innocent victims of impious outrage."[350] "Our exile is an ungodly suffering; do not betray us, thou who dost hold full sovereignty of the land, nor see us torn from the shrine of many gods."[351]

The impious boasts of Polynices' men horrify the simple-hearted, orthodox Theban maidens;[352] while the chorus of

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[342] *I. A.* 1089 ff.
[343] *H. F.* 760.
[344] Eur. *El.* 194 ff.
[345] *Ib.* 592 ff.
[346] *Cho.* 960.
[347] *Ib.* 46, 525.
[348] *Supp.* 751 f.
[349] *Ib.* 755 ff.
[350] *Ib.* 908.
[351] *Ib.* 420 ff.
[352] *Septem* 563 ff.

Mycenæan elders declare that the impious deed begets a brood of children in its own likeness.[353] Furthermore, because Cassandra persists in invoking Apollo while uttering her gloomy forebodings as to the fate of Agamemnon, the chorus, knowing Apollo only as a god of joy, think her a blasphemer.[354] Waxing defiant they assure Aegisthus that never shall they cringe to such a villain as he; that the vengeance he boasts of taking on them some day will never be exacted, if haply by the gods' help Orestes return in triumph.[355] The suppliant mothers, after their just claims have duly been fulfilled, desire to express their heartfelt gratitude by taking an oath of allegiance to Theseus and Athens, for "their efforts on our behalf deserve our worship."[356] Firm is the resolve of the Danaids never to brook base wedlock with the offspring of Aegyptus; naught save the will of the gods can shake their determination.[357] The Theban elders, too, feel righteously indignant at Lycus, the presumptuous usurper: "Thou at least shalt never gloatingly rule over me, nor reap the reward of my many weary labors."[358] What may be called the catechism of the orthodox Greek religion is set forth in a long prayer by the Danaids;[359] and, as we might naturally infer, part of this catechism dwells emphatically upon the practice of piety.[360]

Moderation (σωφροσύνη, μηδὲν ἄγαν), that greatest of all virtues in the popular ethical system of the ancient Greeks, receives from the tragic chorus frequent honorable mention, constituting, as it does, a not insignificant aspect of the choric creed. "'Tis dangerous to have too good a reputation."[361] "Cherish neither the life of license nor that of bondage; in the Mean hath God put strength."[362] "Let thy prayer be moderate; desire not too much," declare the Danaids.[363] "Love that comes in excess brings to men neither fair fame nor virtue."[364] Urging Chrysothemis to follow her sister's pious advice, the chorus of Mycenæan women assure her that such is the only

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[353] *Ag.* 759 f.
[354] *Ib.* 1078.
[355] *Ib.* 1665 ff.
[356] Eur. *Supp.* 1232 ff.
[357] Aesch. *Supp.* 1016 f.
[358] *H. F.* 258 ff.
[359] *Supp.* 625–709.
[360] *Ib.* 669–673, 694–696.
[361] *Ag.* 469 f.
[362] *Eum.* 526 ff.
[363] *Supp.* 1060 ff.
[364] *Med.* 627 ff.

wise course.[365] Such sentiments as these are, of course, in perfect keeping with the piety of the chorus.

By the neat phrase παν̓δίκως εὐσεβής, Aeschylus indicates that trait of human character, which for the chorus constitutes the acme of attainment. The Danaids are entreating the Argive king to offer them protection from the threatening violence of Aegyptus' sons: "Be to us," they implore, "a hospitable host, pious and perfect in justice!"[366] This succinct expression serves as a thorough and masterful interpretation of the religious attitude of the tragic chorus. Piety is the most salient trait, but with piety must go perfect justice.

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[365] Soph. *El.* 464 f.

[366] *Supp.* 418. f.

Conclusion

From this investigation we may with certainty conclude that the tragic poets were at one in assigning to the chorus as a definite, collective body the vitally important religious function of defending and propagating the orthodox Greek faith. The actors might on occasion, as especially in the dramas of Euripides, express unorthodox sentiments; the chorus never. Now since Greek tragedy possessed an essentially religious character, and was maintained as a state institution, it was only natural that there should be in it some agency having as its consistent purpose the steady and potential promotion of the state religion. Such an agency we find the chorus to have been; but whether there was actually a state law requiring this duty of the chorus is uncertain. Nevertheless, the salient and rigid consistency of the religious conduct of the chorus would certainly constitute a cogent argument in favor of the existence of such a law. Probably no other religious influence in Greek life produced upon the popular mind such a profound and lasting effect as did the pious and orthodox utterances of the tragic chorus. Of course, secret rites and ceremonies such as were performed in the Eleusinian mysteries were bound to create deep religious impressions, but it must be remembered that they were known to only a comparatively few, whereas tragedy, being a state institution, conferred its religious benefits freely upon all. At the tragic performances the people learned from their able mentor, the chorus, their greatest lessons in the orthodox faith. Despite the many functional changes which the chorus underwent in the historical development of Greek tragedy, its character as a teacher of traditional orthodoxy remained ever impervious to any modifying influences. However widely they might differ in other respects, the choruses of Aeschylus and of Euripides revealed in their religious attitude a fundamental harmony. The Bacchanals are not a whit less orthodox than the Danaids, yet the *Supplices* of Aeschylus

antedates the *Bacchæ* of Euripides by considerably more than fifty years. Time, then, has failed to bring about any noticeable change in the religious outlook of the tragic chorus. Throughout the entire history of Greek tragedy, the chorus, in contradistinction to the actors, kept ever bright the flame of the Olympian tradition. Strong as the intellectual appeal of tragedy doubtless was, it hardly eclipsed the religious; and if we seek the dominant agent of this religious appeal, we find it to be the chorus. The faithful perpetuation of orthodox sentiment in the tragic chorus constitutes perhaps the only phenomenon of Greek tragedy which suffered neither slight nor radical modification in spite of marked personal differences in the religious views of the individual tragedians; and justly deserves, therefore, to be reckoned as one of the salient and vital elements of Greek tragedy.

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